2020 Transit Plan

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Akron Metropolitan Area Transportation Study
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Akron, Ohio 44308

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Cooperative transportation planning by the Village, City and County governments of Portage and Summit Counties and the Chippewa and Milton Township areas of Wayne County; in conjunction with the U.S. Department of Transportation and the Ohio Department of Transportation.

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Executive Summary

The Akron Metropolitan Area Transportation Study (AMATS) is the metropolitan planning organization responsible for ensuring comprehensive transportation planning for Summit and Portage counties and parts of Wayne County. This responsibility includes coordination with various agencies in Northeast Ohio, not the least of which are two transit providers, METRO RTA in Summit County and the Portage Area Regional Transportation Authority (PARTA) in Portage County. The portions of Wayne County in the AMATS region are not currently served by a public transit provider. In planning for all 700,000 users in the AMATS region, transit provides a necessary tool to ensure mobility access for disabled, elderly, and low income residents. However, transit also provides an opportunity to improve transportation choices for everyone. Providing a strong transit system is essential for a dynamic region preparing for the future.

METRO RTA and PARTA both provide traditional fixed-route service, operating a combined 53 routes, but they also provide demand response services and express bus services. Both agencies have a Compressed Natural Gas (CNG) fueling station, as they include CNG buses in their fleet. METRO's newest station opened in 2016 and PARTA's first station opened in 2018.

Transit serves many purposes. At a minimum, transit provides basic mobility to those without access to vehicles. Transit riders use services to get to work, to get to a doctor, to run errands, to visit family and friends, etc. Some transit users may even choose to ride a bus instead of taking a car, saving wear and tear on their vehicle and avoiding parking fees. Additionally, transit reduces emissions and congestion in metropolitan areas, which is a benefit for all users of the roadways. Lastly, transit can provide a basis for development, spurring economic development along a bus route and adding jobs to an area. Transit-oriented development is defined as a type of urban development that is designed and constructed with transit access in mind. It usually includes mixed-use development and easy access to transit.

Existing System and Coverage

Fixed-route transit service is meant to be reliable, efficient, and timely. That is why the route arrives at and departs from stops at the same time every day. This allows users to plan the transit trips they take each day. These routes tend to be along dense, high-demand travel corridors.

For METRO RTA, over four and a half million riders used its fixed-route service in 2019, with October being the most traveled month of the year. Two routes, West Market (#1) and Arlington (#2), were by far the most popular routes. For PARTA, over one million passengers took advantage of their fixed-routes, with one route on the Kent State University campus (Front Campus/Summit East) totaling over 350,000 passengers for the year. The following tables provide ridership numbers for the entire fixed-route system for both METRO RTA and PARTA.

Table 1 | METRO RTA Fixed-Route Service 2019 Monthly Ridership

ROUTE #	DESCRIPTION	MONTHLY AVERAGE
1	West Market	42,450
2	Arlington	42,143
3	Copley Rd / Hawkins	22,012
4	Delia/N Hawkins	10,102
5	East Market / Ellet	8,109
6	East Market / Lakemore	20,579
7	Cuyahoga Falls Ave	12,287
8	Kenmore / Barberton	19,947
9	Wooster / East Ave	13,561
10	Howard / Portage Trail	18,690
11	South Akron	2,503
12	Tallmadge Hill	13,472
13	Grant / Firestone Park	14,655
14	Euclid / Barberton XP	21,831
17	Brown / Inman	15,707
18	Thornton / Manchester	13,662
19	Eastland	14,268
21	South Main	2,357
24	Lakeshore	3,855
26	W Exchange / White Pond	5,397
28	Merriman Valley	3,746
30	Goodyear / Darrow	9,977
33	State Rd / Wyoga Lake	5,105
34	Cascade Village / Uhler	12,794
50	Montrose Circulator	1,573
51	Stow Circulator	1,418
53	Portage / Graham	2,114
54	DASH Circulator	10,376
59	Chapel Hill Circulator	1,145
60	NCX Chapel Hill / Cleveland	1,088
61	NCX Montrose / Cleveland	5,787
101	Richfield / Bath	1,038
102	Northfield Express	3,142
103	Stow / Hudson	3,403
104	Twinsburg Creekside	2,483
110	Green / Springfield	2,317
AVERAGE MONTHLY TOTAL		**385,093**

Table 2 | PARTA Fixed-Route Service 2019 Monthly Ridership

ROUTE #	DESCRIPTION	MONTHLY AVERAGE
30	Interurban West	5,819
35	Interurban East	13,240
40	Suburban North	2,737
45	Suburban South	3,303
51	Campus Loop	11,637
53	Reverse Loop	5,217
54	Summit St. Express	0
55	Allerton	5,964
57	Stadium Loop	948
58	Front Campus / Summit East	31,129
59	Stadium Night Loop	2,170
60	Black Squirrel	1,063
70	Windham / Garrettsville	855
80	Raven West	356
85	Raven East	965
90	Akron Express	1,573
100	Cleveland Express	448
AVERAGE MONTHLY TOTAL		**89,018**

In addition to fixed-route service, METRO provides several other options for residents of Summit County to utilize for everyday travel. METRO's Call-A-Bus service, serving Macedonia, Twinsburg, Townships of Sagamore Hills, Twinsburg, and Northfield Center and the Villages of Northfield and Reminderville, can be used by anyone who calls a day in advance and schedules the ride. The Call-A-Bus service provides curb to curb service for $4 per ride and is available Monday through Friday. Call-A-Bus services are also available in the City of Green.

SCAT service is origin-to-destination shared rides using a small bus or van. Rides are available Monday through Friday and scheduled a day in advance. SCAT service is $2 per trip and is available to anyone 62 years old or older, or with a disability. Additionally, METRO runs a free shuttle service through downtown Akron during the week, the Downtown Akron Shuttle (DASH). DASH buses run every 10 minutes and travel a loop around downtown and the RKP Transit Center. Lastly, METRO runs two bus routes from the Akron area to Cleveland every weekday morning and evening. Called the Northcoast Express, one route starts in Cuyahoga Falls and travels through Hudson and Twinsburg on its way to Cleveland. The other route starts at the Transit Center in downtown Akron, heads out to the Fairlawn/Montrose area, and makes its way to Cleveland via the expressway.

PARTA also offers several services in addition to their regular fixed-routes. PARTA's Dial-A-Ride service creates access in areas where fixed-route service has not been expanded to or is not feasible. Dial-A-Ride is available to the general public throughout Portage County, which is especially helpful in the eastern portion of the county where

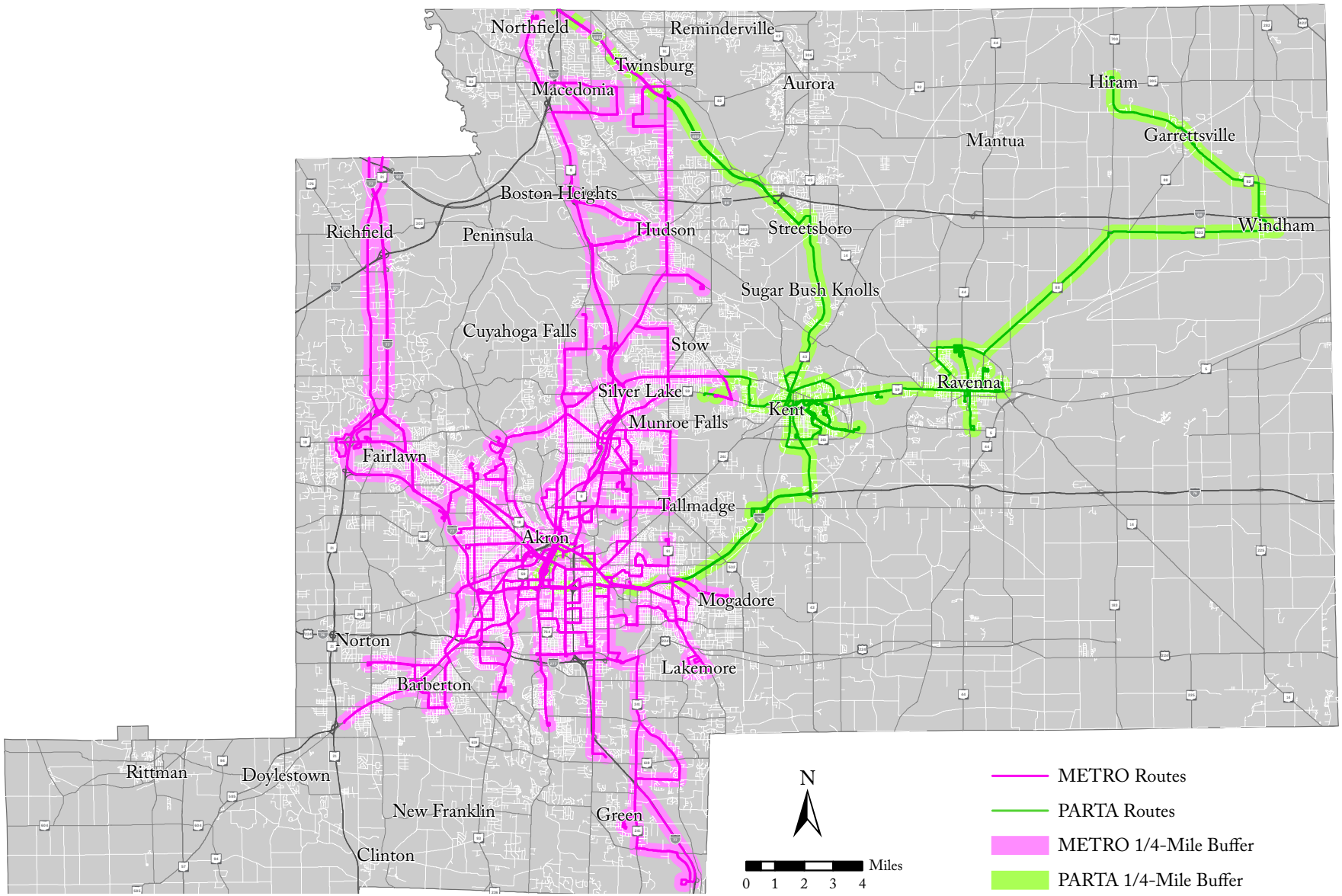
fixed-route service does not reach. This service is offered on small buses with equipment to assist those with disabilities and is $6 per ride, with reduced fare available for those who qualify. Also, PARTA provides express service from Kent to Akron seven times a week and Kent to Cleveland twice a week. The Kent to Cleveland express service travels through Streetsboro on its way to the Cleveland Clinic, Cleveland's Public Square, Cleveland State University, and other locations.

Both METRO and PARTA offer a specialized service for those with disabilities per the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). This complementary paratransit service provides transportation for people with disabilities who cannot use fixed-route buses. It is available at the same time as the fixed-route buses, with the pick-up location and destination no further than three quarters of a mile from the fixed-route.

NEORide was created to encourage coordination among member transit agencies in Ohio in order to provide a more comprehensive and collaborative transit system to residents. Both METRO and PARTA are members, as well as GCRTA (Cleveland), MCPT (Medina), SARTA (Canton), WRTA (Youngstown), and several others around the state of Ohio and Northern Kentucky. Together, these agencies can apply for federal grant programs, promote transit use to the entire state and surrounding regions, combine resources to better serve the communities they represent, and implement services that benefit transit riders.

One recent initiative of NEORide was the introduction of EZFare, a mobile app that makes it easier to buy bus passes, pay your fare before you get on the bus, and even switch between different transit systems. Before EZfare, transit riders had to either swipe their pass or pay bus fare with exact change while getting on the bus. Passes could only be bought at specific locations, making it inconvenient to always have a bus pass. With EZfare, transit riders can download the EZfare app and purchase their bus passes using a credit card and at their own convenience. Riders simply show the pass on their phone to the driver when they board the bus. NEORide will continue to be an asset to transit agencies in Ohio, providing opportunities for collaboration and growth well into the 21st century.

Map 1 | Transit Coverage



Transit Coverage Analysis

When determining how well the region is served by fixed-route transit, it is helpful to determine the number of residents that live within a comfortable walking distance to a transit line. A quarter mile walk is the typical standard. Comparing the population living within walking distance of a bus route to the overall population gives us a percentage of transit coverage for each community. The above map and following table were produced using data from the American Community Survey - 2017 5 year estimates. Out of the entire AMATS region's population of 713,412 (as of 2010), 317,673 people (almost 44% of the population) have access to fixed-route transit within a quarter mile. It should be mentioned that the quarter mile standard is only part of the picture. A comprehensive multi-modal network includes bus shelters, park and ride lots, bike paths and sidewalks. This integrated approach makes access to transit stops seamless and traveling longer distances to stops more feasible.

The following table (Table 3) shows all of the communities with access to fixed-route transit. Older, established cities with a higher density of development have better transit coverage. Cities such as Akron, Kent, Ravenna, Barberton, and Cuyahoga Falls offer some of the highest levels of transit access in the area. Some smaller suburban communities (Silver Lake, Windham, and Franklin Township) also offer excellent coverage. As expected, there are very low levels of transit access in rural communities such as Charlestown, Nelson, and Shalersville Townships. Those communities in the AMATS region that do not have access to fixed-route service are:

- Atwater
- Aurora
- Chippewa
- Clinton
- Deerfield
- Doylestown
- Edinburg
- Mantua
- Milton
- New Franklin
- Palmyra
- Peninsula
- Randolph
- Rittman
- Rootstown
- Suffield

Table 3 | Total Population Transit Coverage by Community

(Includes Only Communities with Access to Fixed-Route Transit Service)

COMMUNITY NAME	ESTIMATED TOTAL POPULATION	ESTIMATED TOTAL POPULATION W/IN 1/4 MILES OF TRANSIT	% TRANSIT COVERAGE
Akron	198,252	165,653	83.6%
Barberton	26,230	15,080	57.5%
Bath Twp	9,697	2,132	22.0%
Boston Heights	666	281	42.2%
Boston Twp	1,209	13	1.1%
Brimfield Twp	10,353	1,369	13.2%
Charlestown Twp	1,788	5	0.3%
Copley Twp	17,305	2,641	15.3%
Coventry Twp	10,911	2,730	25.0%
Cuyahoga Falls	49,329	32,149	65.2%
Fairlawn	7,463	4,426	59.3%
Franklin Twp	6,004	3,603	60.0%
Freedom Twp	2,847	236	8.3%
Garrettsville	2,991	841	28.1%
Green	25,741	6,410	24.9%
Hiram	1,294	75	5.8%
Hiram Twp	2,256	111	4.9%
Hudson	22,250	6,047	27.2%
Kent	29,771	19,850	66.7%
Lakemore	3,075	1,163	37.8%
Macedonia	11,715	3,828	32.7%
Mogadore	2,842	78	2.7%
Munroe Falls	5,065	1,101	21.7%
Nelson Twp	3,123	7	0.2%
Northfield	3,658	2,071	56.6%
Northfield Center Twp	5,840	828	14.2%
Norton	12,038	1,209	10.0%
Ravenna	11,530	7,623	66.1%
Ravenna Twp	9,172	2,550	27.8%
Richfield	3,649	937	25.7%
Richfield Twp	2,515	243	9.7%
Sagamore Hills Twp	10,956	403	3.7%
Shalersville Twp	5,643	10	0.2%
Silver Lake	2,450	1,776	72.5%
Springfield Twp	14,581	2,613	17.9%
Stow	34,743	13,317	38.3%
Streetsboro	16,305	2,686	16.5%
Sugar Bush Knolls	177	23	13.0%
Tallmadge (Summit County)	17,276	4,977	28.8%
Tallmadge (Portage County)	230	99	43.0%
Twinsburg	18,849	3,757	19.9%
Twinsburg Twp	2,879	1,311	45.5%
Windham	1,928	1,182	61.3%
Windham Twp	1,683	229	13.6%
Estimated Total Pop. with Transit Access:		317,673	43.9%

Source: American Community Survey - 2017 5-Year Estimates

Headway Performance

In previous reports, AMATS staff has analyzed the Level of Service of routes for both METRO RTA and PARTA. For this report, a different approach has been used that better characterizes the service that is provided by these transit agencies.

Superior Performance (SP)
Frequent service, passengers don't need schedules

Acceptable Performance (AP)
Maximum desirable wait time, service unattractive to riders with other transportation options

Potential Service Improvement (PSI)
Extended wait time, service unattractive to all riders

Headway Performance Analysis

The term "headway" is the amount of time between bus arrivals at a bus stop. A suburban route that has a bus arrival once an hour would have a 60 minute headway. Frequent bus service often has 10-15 minute headways. The Headway Performance Analysis for both METRO and PARTA is shown in Tables 4 and 5 on the following pages.

METRO's Downtown Akron Shuttle (DASH) service is listed as Superior Performance. The DASH is a recent addition to METRO's service, and provides frequent service every 10 minutes between the hours of 7 a.m. and 7 p.m. as well as 15 minute service on weekday evenings. The route quite often attracts riders who have a car or another transportation option.

METRO RTA shows the majority of their routes as Potential Service Improvement, which means that passengers wait a minimum of 30 minutes for the bus to pick them up, and some passengers may wait longer. The majority of routes after 6 pm have extended wait times, which create complications for travel, while some routes cease by 6 pm. This creates a burden for those workers whose shift ends after this time. Retail and restaurant workers who very often head home in the evening or late at night are more likely to use transit due to low-wage jobs, and have to wait over an hour for a bus. METRO could work to improve the headways for second-shift workers by adding buses to routes in the evening; however this would require large capital and operating expenses.

METRO is in the process of collecting feedback for their Strategic Plan, which they expect to complete by 2021. Additionally, they are currently exploring the idea of adding a Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) corridor to the Akron area. This could greatly improve the overall headway performance for the agency.

Characteristics of BRT may include:

- Dedicated Bus Lanes
- Signal preemption
- Increased Bus Frequency
- Off-board Fare Collection
- Platform-level boarding

METRO anticipates a decision by the end of 2021 regarding the feasibility of a BRT being added to their system.

PARTA removed three routes and added one since the last time their Headway Performance was studied in 2016. About half of the routes are split between being Superior Performance and Acceptable Performance. This means that riders wait at most 15 minutes for the bus, making the service attractive to most transit riders. The other half of the routes is listed as Potential Service Improvement. Although this type of service is unattractive due to its extended wait times, and riders with other transportation options would likely make another choice, these routes provide the opportunity to increase bus service and attract new riders. In 2016, PARTA had more routes operating frequently, but had some routes that didn't run at all in the evenings. Now, all routes run approximately 16 hours a day on weekdays, with limited service on the weekends. This change could mean that there are fewer buses to go around, reducing the frequency for bus service and contributing to the reduction in performance. More buses and more drivers are a costly solution, but would give the routes increased frequency.

Table 4 | METRO RTA Fixed-Route Headway Performance Analysis

ROUTE #	DESCRIPTION	AM PEAK (7-9 AM) AVG HEADWAY (MINS)	HEADWAY PERFORMANCE	DAYTIME (9AM - 4PM) AVG HEADWAY (MINS)	HEADWAY PERFORMANCE	PM PEAK (4-6 PM) AVG HEADWAY (MINS)	HEADWAY PERFORMANCE	EVENING (6 PM +) AVG HEADWAY (MINS)	HEADWAY PERFORMANCE
LOCAL ROUTES									
1	West Market	21	AP	21	AP	31	PSI	36	PSI
2	Arlington	22	AP	21	AP	31	PSI	38	PSI
3	Copley / Hawkins	24	AP	21	AP	29	AP	69	PSI
4	Delia / N Hawkins	33	PSI	48	PSI	29	AP	-	PSI
5	Joy Park / Gilchrist	43	PSI	51	PSI	53	PSI	-	PSI
6	East Market / Lakemore	30	AP	33	PSI	28	AP	66	PSI
7	Cuyahoga Falls Ave	32	PSI	36	PSI	37	PSI	70	PSI
8	Kenmore / Barberton	35	PSI	41	PSI	39	PSI	70	PSI
9	Vern Odom Blvd / East Ave	40	PSI	37	PSI	38	PSI	60	PSI
10	Howard / Portage Trail	32	PSI	46	PSI	51	PSI	71	PSI
11	South Akron	87	PSI	75	PSI	-	PSI	-	PSI
12	Tallmadge Hill	28	AP	38	PSI	38	PSI	57	PSI
13	Grant / Firestone Park	32	PSI	38	PSI	44	PSI	70	PSI
14	Euclid / Barberton Express	26	AP	36	PSI	34	PSI	68	PSI
17	Brown / Inman	25	AP	40	PSI	58	PSI	71	PSI
18	Thornton / Manchester	80	PSI	61	PSI	77	PSI	72	PSI
19	Eastland	46	PSI	43	PSI	46	PSI	61	PSI
21	South Main	40	PSI	40	PSI	40	PSI	40	PSI
24	Lakeshore	43	PSI	34	PSI	50	PSI	70	PSI
26	W. Exchange / White Pond	37	PSI	40	PSI	69	PSI	80	PSI
28	Merriman Valley	69	PSI	56	PSI	40	PSI	-	PSI
30	Goodyear / Darrow	40	PSI	40	PSI	43	PSI	70	PSI
33	State Road / Wyoga Lake	60	PSI	40	PSI	120	PSI	95	PSI
34	Cascade Village / Uhler	34	PSI	34	PSI	43	PSI	71	PSI
CIRCULATOR ROUTES									
50	Montrose Circulator	35	PSI	35	PSI	35	PSI	33	PSI
51	Stow Circulator	36	PSI	36	PSI	37	PSI	36	PSI
53	Portage / Graham	44	PSI	74	PSI	-	PSI	-	PSI
59	Chapel Hill Circulator	50	PSI	35	PSI	45	PSI	33	PSI
DOWNTOWN CIRCULATOR									
54	DASH	10	SP	10	SP	10	SP	14	
NORTH COAST EXPRESS COMMUTER SERVICE TO CLEVELAND									
60	NCX - Cuyahoga Falls to Cleveland	35	PSI	-	PSI	60	PSI	-	PSI
61	NCX - RKP to Cleveland	26	AP	121	PSI	33	PSI	-	PSI
TOWN CENTER ROUTES									
101	Richfield / Bath	55	PSI	104	PSI	-	PSI	-	PSI
102	Northfield	54	PSI	48	PSI	41	PSI	66	PSI
103	Stow / Hudson	113	PSI	93	PSI	94	PSI	-	PSI
104	Twinsburg / Creekside	91	PSI	101	PSI	94	PSI	68	PSI
110	Green / Springfield	55	PSI	99	PSI	53	PSI	-	PSI

Table 5 | PARTA Fixed-Route Headway Performance Analysis

ROUTE #	DESCRIPTION	AM PEAK (7-9 AM) AVG HEADWAY (MINS)	HEADWAY PERFORMANCE	DAYTIME (9AM - 4PM) AVG HEADWAY (MINS)	HEADWAY PERFORMANCE	PM PEAK (4-6 PM) AVG HEADWAY (MINS)	HEADWAY PERFORMANCE	EVENING (7 PM +) AVG HEADWAY (MINS)	HEADWAY PERFORMANCE
COUNTY SERVICE									
30	Interurban West (Kent to Stow)	30	AP	30	AP	30	AP	38	PSI
35	Interurban East (Kent to Ravenna)	30	AP	30	AP	30	AP	38	PSI
40	Suburban North (Kent)	45	PSI	45	PSI	45	PSI	65	PSI
45	Suburban South (Kent)	45	PSI	45	PSI	45	PSI	58	PSI
60	Black Squirrel	30	AP	30	AP	-	PSI	-	PSI
70	Windham / Garrettsville	105	PSI	105	PSI	105	PSI	105	PSI
80	Raven West (Ravenna)	60	PSI	60	PSI	60	PSI	60	PSI
85	Raven East (Ravenna)	60	PSI	60	PSI	60	PSI	60	PSI
90	Akron Express	90	PSI	105	PSI	90	PSI	-	PSI
100	Cleveland Express								
CAMPUS SERVICE									
51	Campus Loop	21	AP	15	AP	15	PSI	30	AP
53	Reverse Loop	30	AP	15	AP	30	PSI	30	AP
55	Allerton	15	AP	15	AP	15	PSI	15	AP
57	Stadium Loop (Summer / KSU Breaks)	30	AP	30	AP	30	PSI	-	PSI
58	Summit East / Front Campus	8	SP	8	SP	12	SP	31	PSI
59	Stadium Night Loop	-	PSI	-	PSI	-	PSI	30	AP

Capital Assets

PARTA Fleet

PARTA has 35 fixed-route buses comprised of 32 large buses and 3 small buses/light transit vehicles (LTVs). Additionally, PARTA has 23 LTVs and 5 vans/small transit vehicles (STVs) that provide demand response service.

PARTA Large Transit Bus

PARTA Light Transit Vehicle (LTV)

PARTA
PORTAGE AREA REGIONAL
TRANSPORTATION AUTHORITY

PARTA Small Transit Vehicle (STV)

METRO Fleet

METRO has an active fleet of 231 vehicles. Of these, 124 are Compressed Natural Gas (CNG), 103 are diesel, and 4 are hybrid. METRO's fleet is varied and includes 60-foot articulated, 40-foot diesel, 40-foot CNG, and 40-foot hybrid buses, as well as smaller vehicles for SCAT and Call-A-Bus services. All METRO buses are equipped with bike racks and are handicap accessible.

METRO Downtown Akron Shuttle (DASH)

METRO Large Transit Bus

METRO North Coast Express Bus

METRO Articulated Transit Bus

METRO Small Bus (SCAT)

METRO Van

Facilities

Both METRO and PARTA have their own CNG fueling stations, with METRO's original station opening in 1997 and a new one in 2016, and PARTA opening the first CNG fueling station in Portage County in 2018. METRO's fleet is approximately 50% CNG today, with a goal of being 100% alternative fuels by 2024. PARTA plans to include more CNG buses in their fleet, having added the fueling station as well as converting part of their facility for the storage and maintenance of these vehicles. CNG fuel positively benefits both transit agencies due to its affordability and consistent price. With both transit agencies having their own CNG fueling stations, we should begin to see more CNG buses in the AMATS area as well as a reduction in operating costs. Incorporating CNG buses into the fleet reduces greenhouse gas emissions significantly and saves the agency on its fuel costs.

PARTA Kent Central Gateway

PARTA
PORTAGE AREA REGIONAL
TRANSPORTATION AUTHORITY

PARTA CNG Fueling Station

METRO Robert K. Pfaff Transit Center

330-762-0341 METRO akronmetro.org

METRO CNG Fueling Station

Transit Ridership

The people who rely on transit for most of their daily trips tend to fall into one of the following groups:

- Elderly
- Low Income
- Minority
- Disabled

Population data for the above groups was gathered using the American Community Survey (ACS) Estimates that are updated annually. The definition of transit coverage is the percentage of people in the demographic group that are within a quarter mile of a bus route. The quarter mile walking distance is considered convenient for most people, however, studies have shown that transit riders are willing to travel farther to a stop that has high-frequency and reliable service. This distance is also increased if there is a well-lit path, such as a bike path or sidewalk. Using ACS Estimates, it was first determined how many of each population lived within a community. Next, the number of people from this population who live within a quarter mile of a bus route was calculated. From there, a percentage was calculated that tells us how well that population is covered by transit within that community. Simply put, the more a transit-dependent population exists, the more comprehensive bus service a community should have. Unfortunately this is not always the case.

Although both METRO and PARTA provide demand response services, sometimes these resources are not available to accommodate those needing assistance due to medical reasons. For that reason, it is important to examine the transit coverage in the AMATS area through the transit agencies fixed-route transit lines, and identify where improvements can be made.

Elderly Population

As stated earlier, the elderly population is one of the largest populations who use transit as their primary form of transportation. Many elderly individuals may find it difficult to walk over a quarter mile, especially without a robust and accessible sidewalk network.Therefore, transit agencies should continuously look at the population of elderly in the area and adjust their bus routes accordingly. In the AMATS area, Akron, Ravenna, and Silver Lake have the best transit coverage for elderly. Unfortunately, Stow, Green, and Tallmadge have larger elderly populations, but don't have high fixed-route transit coverage. For the AMATS region, there is transit coverage of 39.6% of the elderly population as a whole.

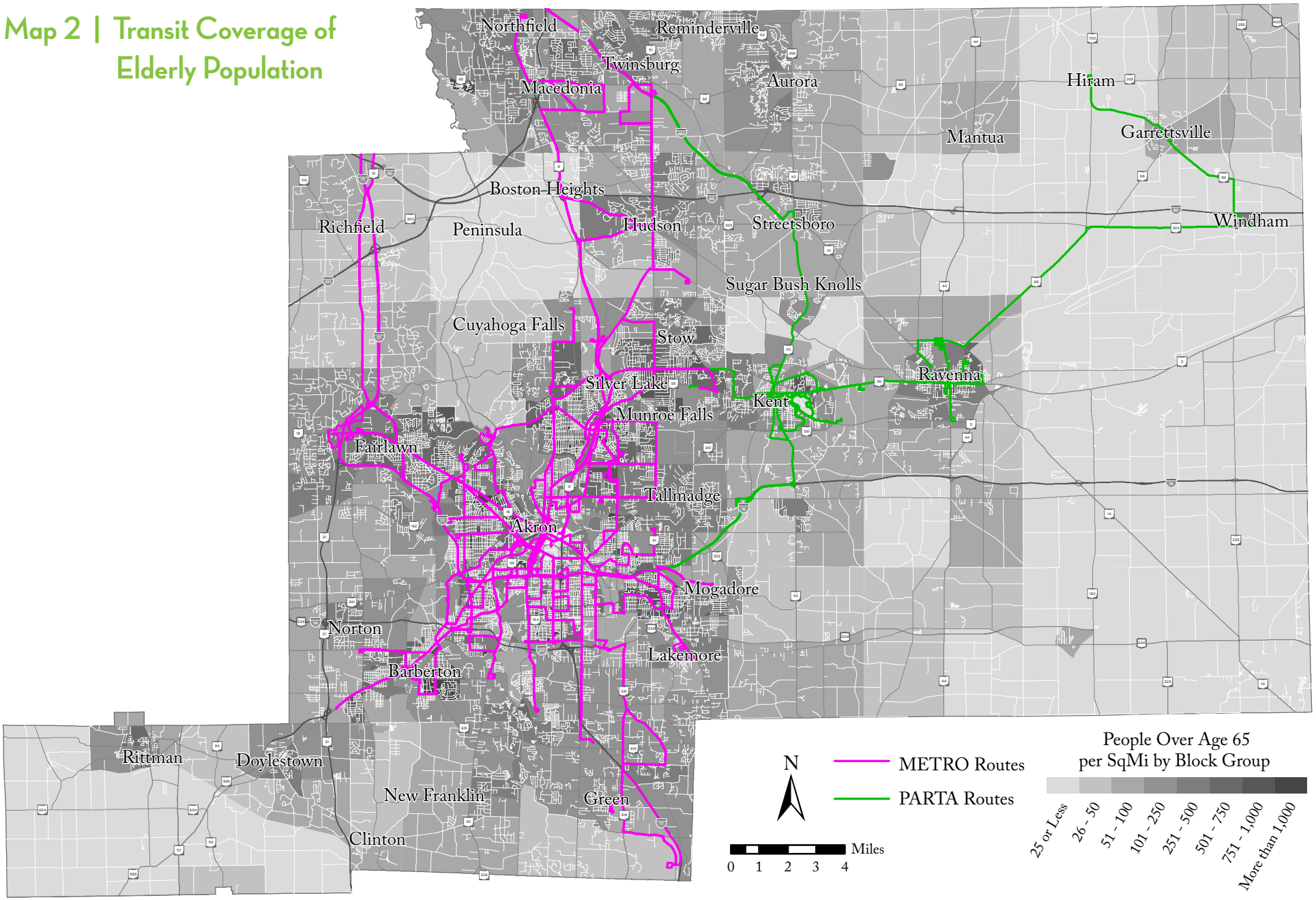
Table 6 | Elderly Population Transit Coverage by Community

(Includes Only Communities with Access to Fixed-Route Transit Service)

COMMUNITY NAME	ESTIMATED ELDERLY POPULATION	ESTIMATED ELDERLY POPULATION W/IN 1/4 MILES OF TRANSIT	% TRANSIT COVERAGE
Akron	28,094	22,314	79.4%
Barberton	4,727	2,566	54.3%
Bath Twp	1,843	557	30.2%
Boston Heights	141	45	31.9%
Boston Twp	200	1	0.5%
Brimfield Twp	1,493	170	11.4%
Charlestown Twp	218	1	0.5%
Copley Twp	3,041	493	16.2%
Coventry Twp	1,976	489	24.7%
Cuyahoga Falls	7,942	5,201	65.5%
Fairlawn	1,807	1,003	55.5%
Franklin Twp	848	378	44.6%
Freedom Twp	451	45	10.0%
Garrettsville	416	119	28.6%
Green	4,507	1,159	25.7%
Hiram	100	11	11.0%
Hiram Twp	448	26	5.8%
Hudson	3,604	1,161	32.2%
Kent	2,365	1,291	54.6%
Lakemore	771	233	30.2%
Macedonia	2,044	611	29.9%
Mogadore	454	17	3.7%
Munroe Falls	1,095	254	23.2%
Nelson Twp	665	1	0.2%
Northfield	532	308	57.9%
Northfield Center Twp	1,173	157	13.4%
Norton	2,128	188	8.8%
Ravenna	1,974	1,395	70.7%
Ravenna Twp	1,566	411	26.2%
Richfield	772	200	25.9%
Richfield Twp	593	53	8.9%
Sagamore Hills Twp	2,307	61	2.6%
Shalersville Twp	837	1	0.1%
Silver Lake	520	367	70.6%
Springfield Twp	2,699	477	17.7%
Stow	5,807	2,453	42.2%
Streetsboro	2,234	347	15.5%
Sugar Bush Knolls	62	4	6.5%
Tallmadge (Summit County)	3,729	949	25.4%
Tallmadge (Portage County)	24	12	50.0%
Twinsburg	3,495	656	18.8%
Twinsburg Twp	299	191	63.9%
Windham	213	113	53.1%
Windham Twp	316	42	13.3%
Estimated Elderly Pop. with Transit Access:		46,531	39.6%

Source: American Community Survey - 2017 5-Year Estimates

Map 2 | Transit Coverage of Elderly Population



Low Income Population

Low income populations often are without any other means of travel than the bus. Transit is the most affordable option, but not always the most convenient. The low income population in the AMATS area as a whole has 64.7% transit coverage. Franklin Township has the best transit coverage for this population, at almost 100%. Silver Lake and Akron also have strong transit coverage, around 90% for low income persons. Unfortunately, Green, Stow, Streetsboro, Tallmadge, and Twinsburg cover between 20% and 40% of the low income persons in their communities. This equates to 60% or more of the low income people in these communities having to walk farther than a quarter mile to get to a bus route.

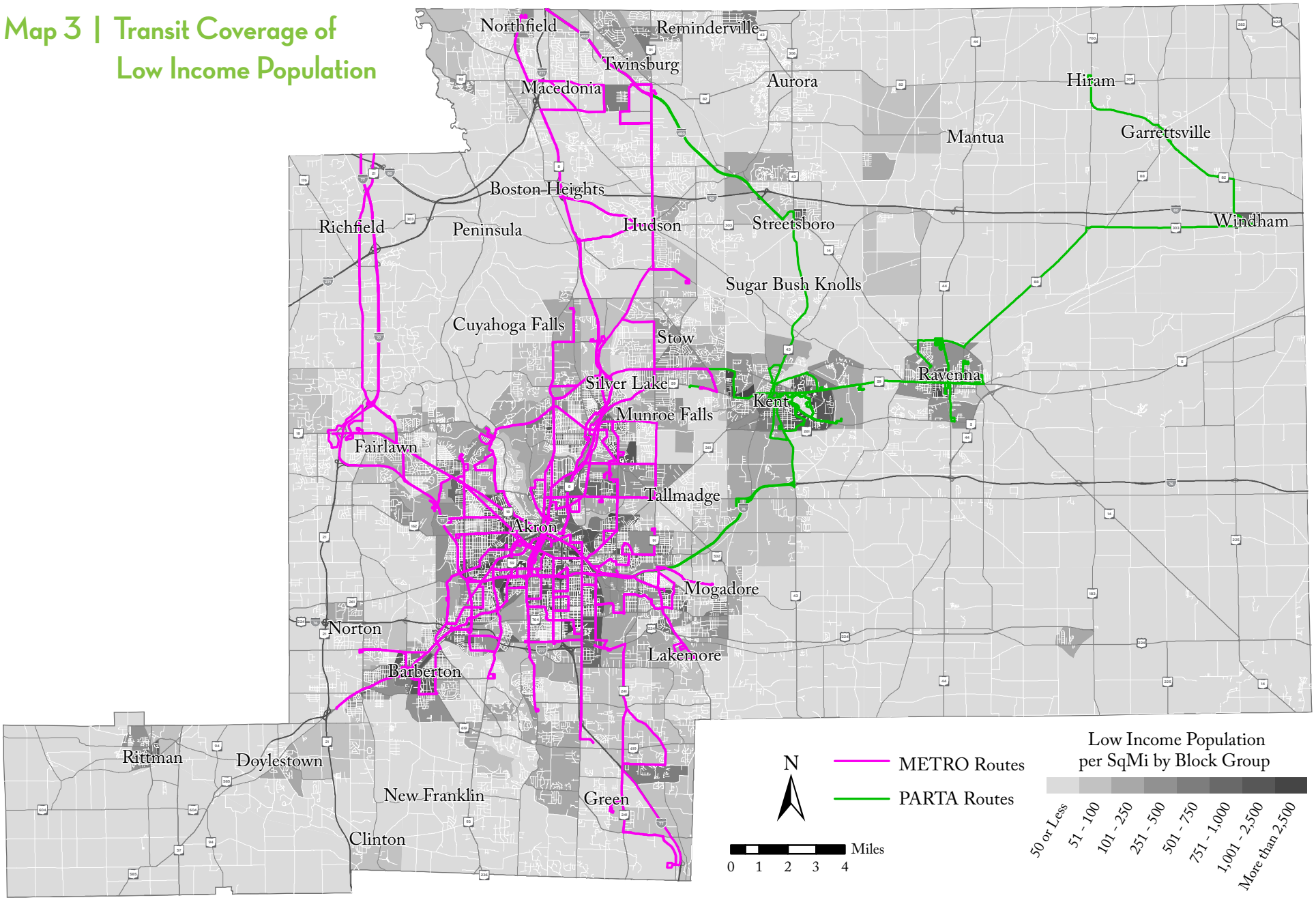
Table 7 | Low Income Population Transit Coverage by Community

(Includes Only Communities with Access to Fixed-Route Transit Service)

COMMUNITY NAME	ESTIMATED LOW INCOME POPULATION	ESTIMATED LOW INCOME POPULATION W/IN 1/4 MILES OF TRANSIT	% TRANSIT COVERAGE
Akron	46,450	41,283	88.9%
Barberton	4,675	3,291	70.4%
Bath Twp	457	73	16.0%
Boston Heights	27	7	25.9%
Boston Twp	36	1	2.8%
Brimfield Twp	1,215	288	23.7%
Charlestown Twp	317	1	0.3%
Copley Twp	546	68	12.5%
Coventry Twp	796	235	29.5%
Cuyahoga Falls	5,105	3,659	71.7%
Fairlawn	472	297	62.9%
Franklin Twp	886	885	99.9%
Freedom Twp	412	18	4.4%
Garrettsville	315	36	11.4%
Green	2,608	732	28.1%
Hiram	14	3	21.4%
Hiram Twp	104	4	3.8%
Hudson	576	177	30.7%
Kent	8,167	5,503	67.4%
Lakemore	394	107	27.2%
Macedonia	203	110	54.2%
Mogadore	289	2	0.7%
Munroe Falls	340	34	10.0%
Nelson Twp	258	0	0.0%
Northfield	426	251	58.9%
Northfield Center Twp	68	3	4.4%
Norton	708	55	7.8%
Ravenna	2,549	1,747	68.5%
Ravenna Twp	976	439	45.0%
Richfield	96	20	20.8%
Richfield Twp	0	0	100.0%
Sagamore Hills Twp	490	5	1.0%
Shalersville Twp	677	1	0.1%
Silver Lake	74	68	91.9%
Springfield Twp	1,175	326	27.7%
Stow	1,915	754	39.4%
Streetsboro	1,605	385	24.0%
Sugar Bush Knolls	4	1	25.0%
Tallmadge (Summit County)	1,505	656	43.6%
Tallmadge (Portage County)	0	0	100.0%
Twinsburg	1,246	244	19.6%
Twinsburg Twp	586	258	44.0%
Windham	522	347	66.5%
Windham Twp	226	32	14.2%
Estimated Low Income Pop. with Transit Access:		62,406	64.7%

Source: American Community Survey - 2017 5-Year Estimates

Map 3 | Transit Coverage of Low Income Population



Minority Population

Sixty-nine percent of the minority population has transit coverage in the AMATS region. Akron has by far the largest minority population in the AMATS area. Research shows that over 88% of minorities in Akron have transit coverage within a quarter mile. Kent has the second highest population of minorities with 76% transit coverage. Ravenna and Franklin Township are two other communities that have 80% and 82% transit coverage, respectively. Twinsburg has a higher population of minorities, but only 19% transit coverage. The greatest discrepancy, however, is in Twinsburg Township. Although there is 33.3% coverage for minorities in that community, minorities make up almost 60% of the total population. An additional bus stop in this small geographic area may be one solution. However, this would potentially provide a long, inefficient trip and might not provide the connections that residents of the township truly need. People living in this area may be looking to travel to Cleveland or Aurora/Streetsboro and therefore regional connections should be looked into for better solutions.

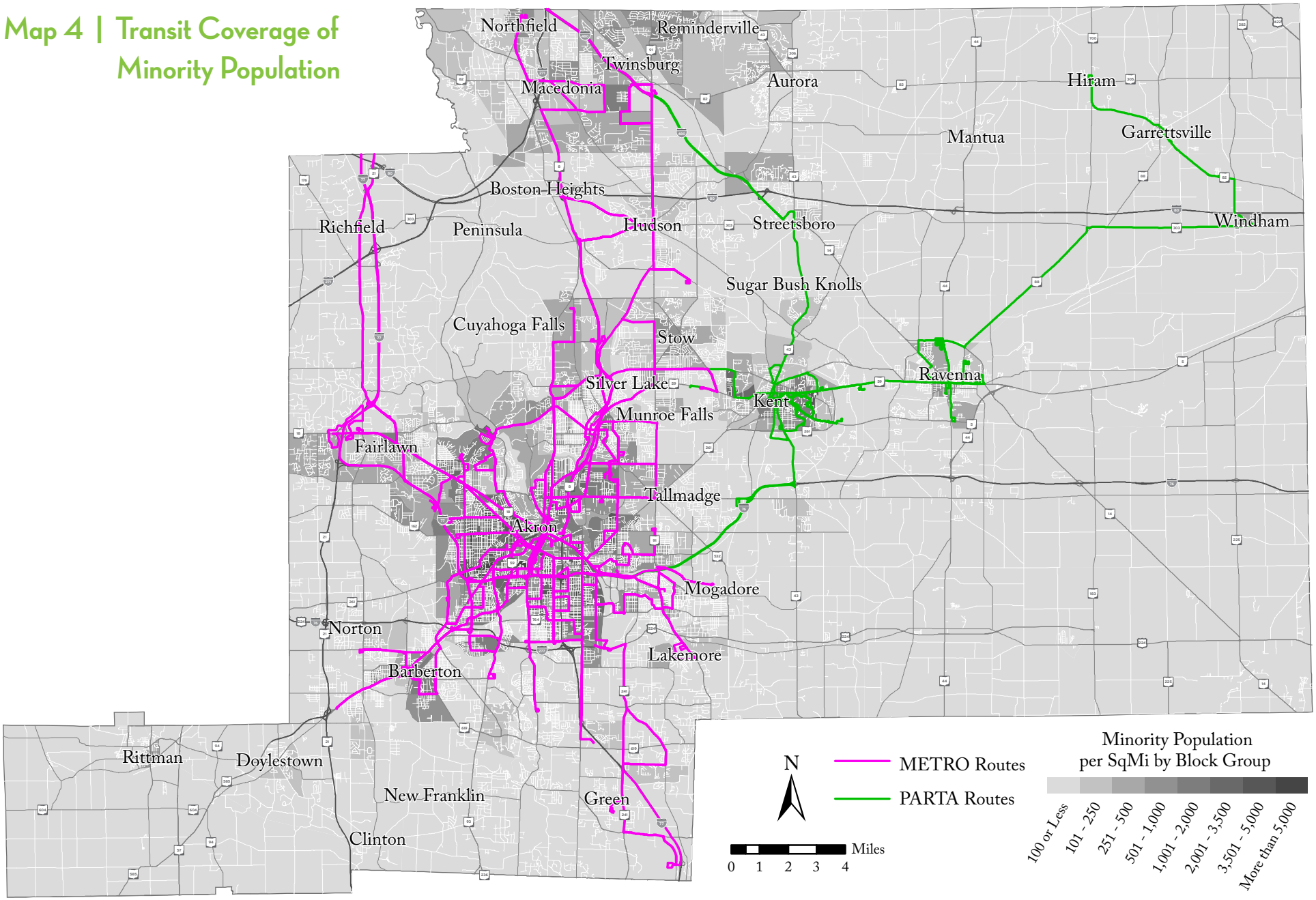
Table 8 | Minority Population Transit Coverage by Community

(Includes Only Communities with Access to Fixed-Route Transit Service)

COMMUNITY NAME	ESTIMATED MINORITY POPULATION	ESTIMATED MINORITY POPULATION W/IN 1/4 MILES OF TRANSIT	% TRANSIT COVERAGE
Akron	78,642	69,553	88.4%
Barberton	3,259	2,093	64.2%
Bath Twp	697	163	23.4%
Boston Heights	0	0	100.0%
Boston Twp	81	0	0.0%
Brimfield Twp	421	104	24.7%
Charlestown Twp	56	0	0.0%
Copley Twp	2,783	587	21.1%
Coventry Twp	426	109	25.6%
Cuyahoga Falls	4,155	3,043	73.2%
Fairlawn	1,234	823	66.7%
Franklin Twp	448	366	81.7%
Freedom Twp	26	5	19.2%
Garrettsville	77	6	7.8%
Green	1,664	485	29.1%
Hiram	234	6	2.6%
Hiram Twp	37	3	8.1%
Hudson	1,691	516	30.5%
Kent	6,338	4,816	76.0%
Lakemore	342	95	27.8%
Macedonia	1,699	705	41.5%
Mogadore	23	2	8.7%
Munroe Falls	302	40	13.2%
Nelson Twp	0	0	100.0%
Northfield	716	437	61.0%
Northfield Center Twp	1,170	184	15.7%
Norton	324	51	15.7%
Ravenna	1,020	813	79.7%
Ravenna Twp	737	337	45.7%
Richfield	126	73	57.9%
Richfield Twp	250	17	6.8%
Sagamore Hills Twp	1,134	31	2.7%
Shalersville Twp	185	1	0.5%
Silver Lake	96	63	65.6%
Springfield Twp	313	119	38.0%
Stow	2,728	823	30.2%
Streetsboro	2,268	333	14.7%
Sugar Bush Knolls	0	0	100.0%
Tallmadge (Summit County)	1,533	711	46.4%
Tallmadge (Portage County)	72	10	13.9%
Twinsburg	4,459	851	19.1%
Twinsburg Twp	1,690	563	33.3%
Windham	166	116	69.9%
Windham Twp	60	8	13.3%
Estimated Minority Pop. with Transit Access:		89,061	69.5%

Source: American Community Survey - 2017 5-Year Estimates

Map 4 | Transit Coverage of Minority Population



Disabled Population

The overall disabled population in the AMATS area is over 80,000 people. This population may be the most vulnerable in that traveling a quarter mile to a bus route might be difficult, but anything farther might be impossible. The communities with the greatest disabled populations (Akron, Cuyahoga Falls, and Barberton) have 77%, 65%, and 53% transit coverage, respectively. Barberton and Twinsburg could work with METRO on finding solutions that would benefit their disabled residents, particularly with better access to existing transit stops through an extensive and connected multi-modal network that makes traveling farther less of a challenge.

Demand Response Services

METRO offers curb to curb service called Call-a-Bus. This service is available in specific areas in Summit County, during weekdays only, and costs riders $4 each way. In addition, METRO offers SCAT services for passengers who have a temporary or permanent disability or are over the age of 62.

PARTA also offers a Dial-A Ride service, available in specific areas of Portage County on specific days. The cost is $6 per ride, with a discount available for seniors, disabled, and others. There are free trips available for non-emergency medical services, as well as for those people with a Developmental Disability Medicaid waiver.

As previously mentioned, both METRO and PARTA offer a specialized service for the disabled per the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). This paratransit service provides transportation for people with disabilities who cannot use fixed-route buses. This service complements the fixed-route service, is available at the same time as the fixed-route schedule, with the pick-up location and destination no further than three quarters of a mile from the fixed-route line.

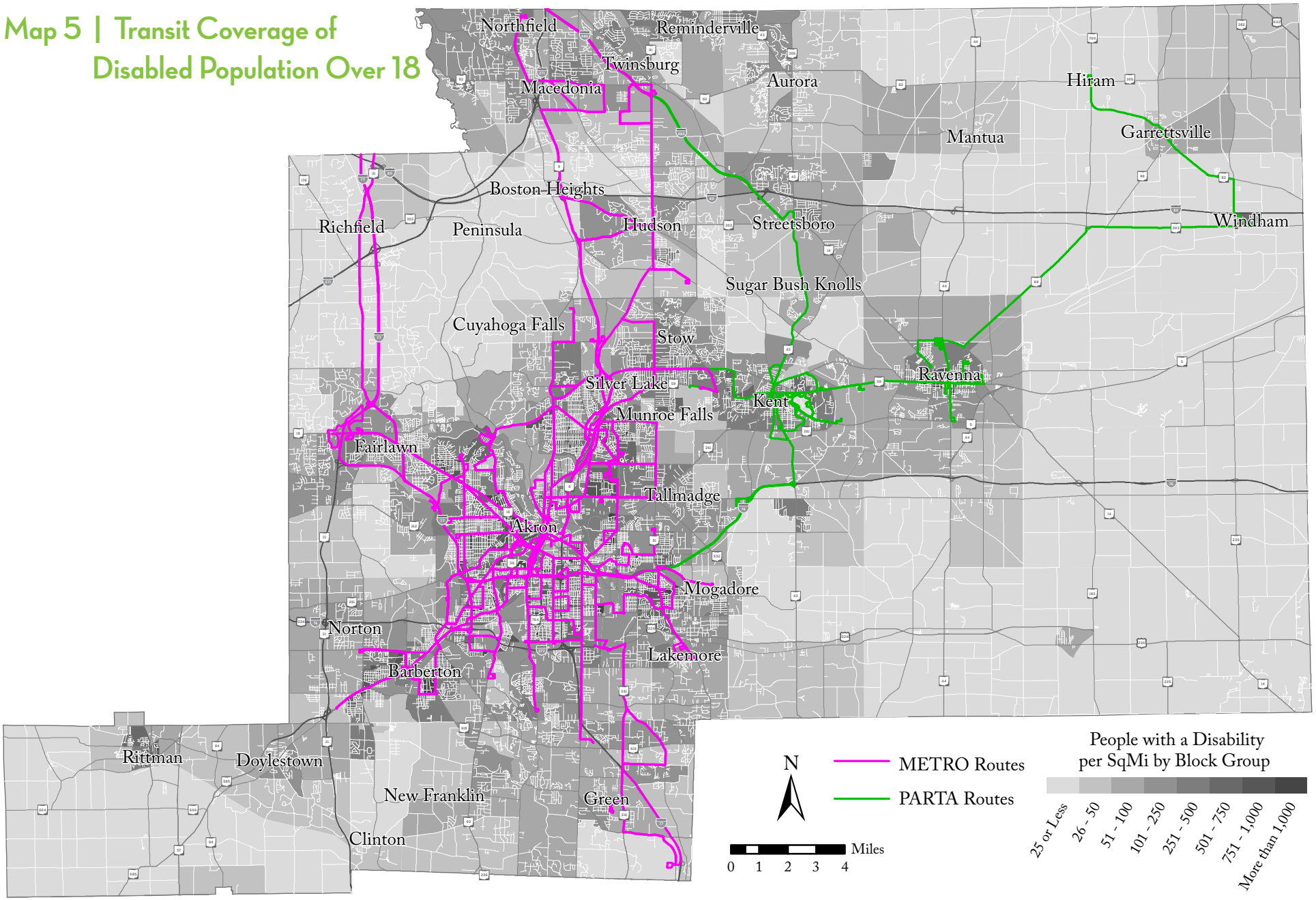
Table 9 | Disabled Population Over 18 Transit Coverage by Community

(Includes Only Communities with Access to Fixed-Route Transit Service)

COMMUNITY NAME	ESTIMATED DISABLED POPULATION OVER 18	ESTIMATED DISABLED POPULATION OVER 18 W/IN 1/4 MILES OF TRANSIT	% TRANSIT COVERAGE
Akron	29,591	22,827	77.1%
Barberton	4,572	2,443	53.4%
Bath Twp	810	278	34.3%
Boston Heights	109	21	19.3%
Boston Twp	101	4	4.0%
Brimfield Twp	1,107	117	10.6%
Charlestown Twp	380	1	0.3%
Copley Twp	1,455	241	16.6%
Coventry Twp	1,427	405	28.4%
Cuyahoga Falls	5,867	3,844	65.5%
Fairlawn	634	356	56.2%
Franklin Twp	615	339	55.1%
Freedom Twp	479	43	9.0%
Garrettsville	296	88	29.7%
Green	2,698	648	24.0%
Hiram	135	6	4.4%
Hiram Twp	224	9	4.0%
Hudson	1,618	492	30.4%
Kent	3,521	1,552	44.1%
Lakemore	482	178	36.9%
Macedonia	1,307	422	32.3%
Mogadore	251	14	5.6%
Munroe Falls	495	53	10.7%
Nelson Twp	656	1	0.2%
Northfield	398	225	56.5%
Northfield Center Twp	441	67	15.2%
Norton	1,623	151	9.3%
Ravenna	2,025	1,385	68.4%
Ravenna Twp	1,853	466	25.1%
Richfield	315	75	23.8%
Richfield Twp	208	26	12.5%
Sagamore Hills Twp	1,256	22	1.8%
Shalersville Twp	715	1	0.1%
Silver Lake	288	185	64.2%
Springfield Twp	1,761	352	20.0%
Stow	3,368	1,349	40.1%
Streetsboro	2,134	311	14.6%
Sugar Bush Knolls	16	3	18.8%
Tallmadge (Summit County)	2,118	629	29.7%
Tallmadge (Portage County)	0	0	100.0%
Twinsburg	1,910	329	17.2%
Twinsburg Twp	185	123	66.5%
Windham	321	196	61.1%
Windham Twp	333	41	12.3%
Estimated Disabled Pop. with Transit Access:		40,318	44.2%

Source: American Community Survey - 2017 5-Year Estimates

Map 5 | Transit Coverage of Disabled Population Over 18



Performance Measures

Performance and asset measures are widely used in the transit industry today, with most transit agencies reporting basic information about their service to the National Transit Database (NTD); reporting data to the NTD is required for most transit agencies to receive federal transit funding. ODOT is considering the following performance measures to be used for transit development:

- Service effectiveness –passengers per hour
- Cost efficiency –cost per hour
- Cost effectiveness –cost per passenger
- Customer satisfaction –portion of riders with high levels of satisfaction
- Transit asset management –fleet and infrastructure capital maintenance.

Transit asset management (TAM) is the strategic and systematic practice of procuring, operating, inspecting, maintaining, rehabilitating, and replacing transit capital assets to manage their performance, risks, and costs over their life cycles to provide safe, cost-effective, and reliable public transportation. TAM uses transit asset condition to guide how to manage capital assets and prioritize funding to improve or maintain a state of good repair.

Federal regulaions require the Federal Transit Administration (FTA) to develop a rule to establish a strategic and systematic process of operating, maintaining and improving public transportation capital assets effectively through their entire life cycle. FTA's national Transit Asset Management system rule defines the term, "state of good repair," requires grantees to develop a TAM plan, establishes performance measures, establishes annual reporting requirements, and requires FTA to provide technical assistance.

In July 2016, FTA published a final rule for TAM. The rule requires FTA grantees to develop asset management plans for their public transportation assets, including vehicles, facilities, equipment, and other infrastructure.

A state of good repair (SGR) is a threshold that identifies the desired performance condition of a capital asset, such as a bus, transfer facility, or office building. An asset is in a state of good repair when it is able to operate at a full level of performance. This means:

- The asset is able to perform its designed function;
- Does not pose a known or unacceptable safety risk (condition); and
- Its life cycle investments have been met or recovered (useful life benchmark (ULB))

SGR performance targets are based on realistic expectations derived from the most recent available data (condition and ULB), FTA performance measure criteria, and the financial resources from all sources that the area reasonably expects to be available during the TAM plan horizon period for capital planning purposes.

PARTA has set a goal to maintain their fleet with at least 100 percent of the vehicles in fair or good condition. Although the entire bus fleet meets this standard, their cutaway and van fleet only has 65 percent of the fleet meeting this standard. PARTA intends to replace vehicles in order meet this goal.

METRO has set targets for SGR and determined that their overall revenue vehicles should be less than 15% over their ULB, on average. METRO also reviews its Bus Improvement Plan (BIP) annually to ensure the buses are within the ULB of 12 years. This helps to keep their fleet reliable and reduce maintenance costs.

Conditions

Coverage

Overall coverage in Summit and Portage Counties is excellent compared to similar transit agencies nationwide. However, there are still several pockets or gaps in coverage that need improvement. Stow and Twinsburg are two communities that show a large population of elderly, low income, minority, and disabled, and yet have poor transit coverage. The communities of Green and Tallmadge also showed gaps in their transit coverage. These communities would benefit from a discussion and potential coordination with METRO RTA regarding travel patterns and what amenities would better serve the needs of the community.

In Portage County, Streetsboro has larger populations of low income, minority, and disabled people. Due to being far from the bulk of PARTA's fixed route coverage (throughout the KSU campus and City of Kent), there is limited transit coverage for the low income riders, and very poor coverage for both minority and disabled populations. Streetsboro has insufficient pedestrian amenities that assist with transit use: SR 14 and SR 303 are very wide; commercial developments are far from transit stops and surrounded by large parking lots. Additionally, although Kent tends to have strong transit coverage, improvements could be made for the disabled population that is only 44% covered by fixed-route service in that city.

Access

Wait Times

For both METRO and PARTA, the majority of their routes are those that require riders to consult a schedule to know when the next bus will arrive. The elasticity of frequency is the idea that as frequency increases, ridership expands beyond a straight line increase. We can see that at a certain point, ridership increases exponentially when transit riders no longer have to plan their lives around a bus schedule. This point is different depending on the length of a trip or even the location where service is taking place. Some transit riders consider frequent service as arriving every 15 minutes or less. In bigger cities with large populations using transit, the timeframe is even less, down to 6 minutes. Additionally, a rider taking a shorter trip will consider walking if the wait time for a bus is too long. Therefore, transit agencies should consider studying what the average wait time should be to increase their ridership.

PARTA recognized that some of their stops had long wait times, but that it wasn't feasible to expand their routes to increase frequency. In 2016, to make transit more attractive, PARTA implemented their real-time application – SpotPARTA. This app allows passengers waiting for a bus to see where their bus is either by looking at a map on a smart phone or texting the stop ID.

Bus Rapid Transit - As discussed previously, Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) is characterized as frequent service along a specific corridor, potentially with signal preemption, dedicated lanes, and other features to speed up access. The idea behind BRT is that riders can expect reliable and fast service on a specific route, and transit agencies can expect increased ridership. Both METRO and PARTA have route corridors with the potential to become BRT systems.

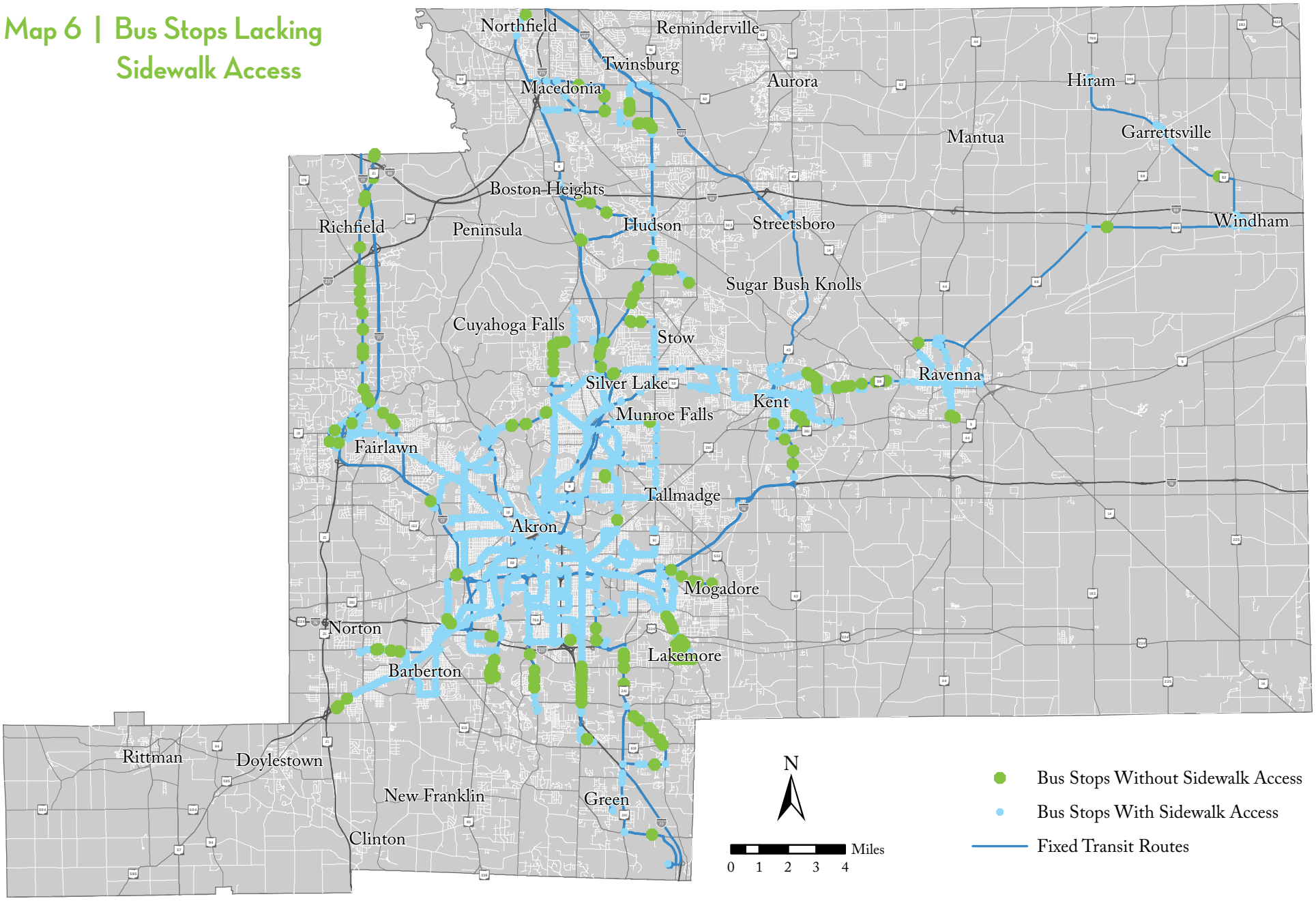
Sidewalks

Sidewalks provide the best available means for many transit-dependent populations – such as people with disabilities, the elderly, and low income persons - to access bus routes and service. It is not a coincidence that most transit stops are located on or near sidewalks. Access to these stops is especially critical for persons using mobility devices. Currently, the Greater Akron area has 2,625 stops located throughout Portage and Summit counties. Of those 2,625 stops, 610 (23 percent) are located in areas without sidewalks.

Bus Shelters

Using data from both PARTA and METRO RTA, transit stops were analyzed for location and amenities. It was determined that there are a total of 2,625 stops in the AMATS region, 366 belonging to PARTA and 2,259 belonging to METRO RTA. Of these, PARTA has 53 stops with bus shelters while METRO RTA has 114. Current policies suggest adding shelters at stops where there are at least 30 boardings a day. Transit shelters have been shown to have a positive impact on ridership and rider satisfaction. Attractive shelters improve the public's perception of transit. Ridership numbers have been known to increase where bus shelters are added. Riders are more comfortable waiting longer periods of time when there is a shelter to wait in, and are willing to walk farther to get to a stop with a shelter. With this information, it is obvious that improvements can be made in the AMATS area. It is important to note that shelters are not the only solution that can encourage an increase in ridership, especially when considering the cost to implement as well as maintain them. At a cost of $5,500 for the shelter, with additional costs for the ADA-accessible concrete pad, transit agencies are careful about where to place shelters. As mentioned previously, a strong multimodal network that includes bike paths, sidewalks, crosswalks, and lighting as well as stops with frequent and reliable service have been shown to attract more transit riders.

Map 6 | Bus Stops Lacking Sidewalk Access



Transit-Oriented Development

The identification of transit corridors is essential in best determining where to concentrate limited funding. Transit corridors not only guide us in the investment of transit service and infrastructure – when implemented correctly, they can guide overall community development and investment. Popular transit corridors and the heavy foot traffic they generate create an opportunity to develop complementary land uses (for example: residential, retail, office, etc.) within close proximity to each other.

Recommendations

Coverage

Improve Coverage in Stow, Tallmadge, and Green

When studying the transit coverage for minority, elderly, low income, and disabled populations, several communities need improved transit coverage for all four of these populations. Coverage in the communities of Stow, Twinsburg, Green, and Tallmadge should be improved to better serve these populations. The communities of Stow and Twinsburg have larger populations of all four of the vulnerable groups, yet have lower transit coverage. Green and Tallmadge both have larger populations of elderly, low income, and disabled, but provide limited transit coverage. These pockets of development at the outer edges of the METRO and PARTA service areas need improved service. Unfortunately, remoteness from the central service area makes additional coverage expensive. Additionally, traditional bus service may not be the best solution for these communities. Finding solutions that meet the needs of the residents in an efficient manner should be the ultimate goal.

Coverage in Streetsboro

Streetsboro has limited coverage for the minority, low income, and disabled riders in its community. PARTA and Streetsboro should explore opportunities to better serve these transit riders and improve coverage.

Access

Increased Headways

Although transit may never replace the automobile for some people, reliable and frequent service attracts new riders. Transit has always been an affordable alternative to cars, but long wait times are inconvenient and become a deterrent for many. The point where riders no longer have to memorize a bus schedule is where we see ridership increase. Comparing both METRO's and PARTA's ridership numbers to their Headway Performance proves this point. Each transit agency has a route with frequent service that sees large ridership numbers. For this reason, it is recommended that both transit agencies review their routes and consider adding more frequent service to certain busy routes, especially those that include shorter trips.

Each transit agency has express routes that should be reviewed for potential improvements. Adding a midday trip to Cleveland for both METRO and PARTA would be helpful for many who may not be commuting, but instead may be traveling north for a doctor appointment. This could make the service more attractive and result in an increase in ridership.

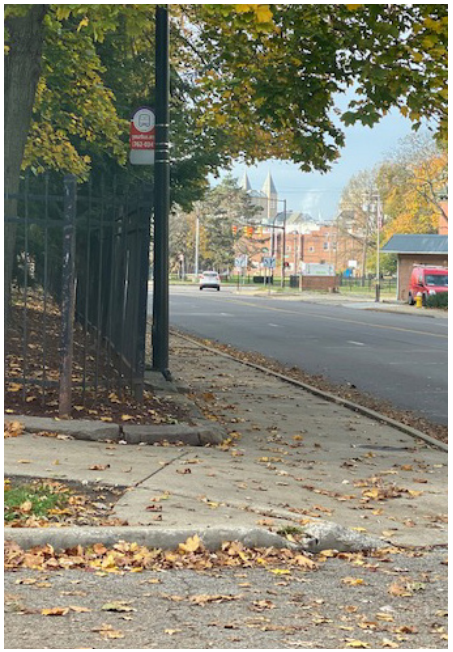
Sidewalks

Since most transit trips include a pedestrian trip at one or both ends, it is important to create good walking conditions near transit routes. According to AMATS' *Active Transportation Plan* (December 2019), communities should seek improvements in the areas of providing pedestrian access to transit service and eliminating gaps in network connections. Many of the Greater Akron area's existing walking networks consist of community sidewalks that are along busy roadways that also serve as transit routes. Communities and project sponsors should make pedestrian safety improvements a priority on those routes and streets with high traffic volumes and speeds (see Map 6 on page 22).

Greater Akron area communities should work in close concert with METRO and PARTA when developing new sidewalk networks and when planning improvements to existing ones. The region's communities and transit authorities should:

- Increase the number of bus stops with a sidewalk connection
- Ensure that networks include pedestrian-friendly bus stops and related amenities

Bus Stop NEEDS Sidewalk Access



Bus Stop HAS Sidewalk Access

- Provide convenient transit access in those locations where there is known heavy pedestrian traffic
- Consider convenient pedestrian access when identifying new transit connections and routes
- Conduct in-depth, periodic analyses of bus stop locations and route connections within the Greater Akron area

Improvements For Transit Stops

Both AMATS area transit agencies have specific policies regarding when a shelter or other amenity can be added to a stop. For METRO RTA, there must be at least 30 boardings a day at a stop to trigger a review for a shelter. Additional considerations include proximity to community facilities, hospitals/medical centers and other key destinations. Although a small percentage of METRO's stops have shelters, the majority of stops that meet the criteria already have shelters in place. For PARTA, demographics and safety as well as ridership are part of their shelter review process. Additionally, PARTA has executed agreements with some communities to place shelters where needed. These communities recognized that their residents would benefit if shelters were in place, and partnered with PARTA to share the expense. Additionally, PARTA has extended this type of agreement to private sector developers in those communities, with some businesses choosing to place their own concrete pads and shelters. AMATS encourages this type of cooperation for the benefit of citizens and communities alike.

In the AMATS area, bus stop amenities are not uniform. A small amount of stops have bus shelters, while the vast majority of stops are simply a sign on the sidewalk, with many different versions in between. It is common knowledge that a person can sometimes have a long wait for a bus. Although the best stop will protect riders from the elements, having a place to sit is helpful as well. In the interest of increasing ridership, we must look at what the riders would prefer. We know that they want higher frequency and faster service, but providing a place to rest while waiting for the bus would go far for many people. Less expensive than a shelter, a Simme Seat ™ *(pictured to the right)* can provide seating for a couple of people per stop at a fraction of the cost. These seats could be added to the existing bus stop sign posts. Shelters are not only more visible, but provide sponsorship opportunities that can offset their costs. Shelters can be used to brand the transit agency and make it more appealing to the community.

If the cost of the shelters prevents their installation, there are other ways to improve the comfort of a bus stop to its riders. Ensuring all stops are on concrete pads, adding sidewalks where needed, incorporating seating, lighting, trash cans, and schedules wherever possible would go a long way in making public transit more appealing.

Transit-Oriented Development

As METRO looks into the possibility of adding a Bus Rapid Transit line to their fixed-route service, development along the corridor should be considered fundamental to the success of the line. Transit-Oriented Development (TOD) is the growth of businesses and residential units within walking distance of a transit stop. Desirable places to live, restaurants, parks, grocery stores, coffee shops, and the like can encourage transit use. In return, transit use near these locations can promote vibrant businesses. Pairing a BRT line with a conscious effort to develop places people want and need encourages less auto-dependency. Taking into account the large populations of elderly, low-income, minority and disabled, as well as young people who prefer walkable places, TOD is essential in providing the ability for these groups to get where they need, or want, to be.

PARTA would also benefit from a transit-oriented development in their area. Although the automobile is fully accommodated for in TOD, these developments are designed to be comfortable for non-motorized transportation, such as walking or bicycling.

Implementation

Transit agencies have access to federal, state, and local funding sources. The local sources primarily include their dedicated sales tax revenue. For METRO RTA, this amounts to a .50% sales tax while PARTA benefits from a .25% sales tax. These sales tax funds can be used for operations as well as a match for federal funds. Another local source of funding is the fare box revenue, which are the funds received from riders. This revenue makes up a small (10%-20%) part of the operating budget, and can vary by month and by route, making it difficult to plan ahead using this source. The transit agency's operating expenses are funded mainly through these two local sources.

Federal Grant Programs

Federal funding programs are generally used for capital expenses. Luckily, transit agencies can utilize several federal funding sources, administered at the state level by the Ohio Department of Transportation.

- The primary source of federal funding for capital and maintenance projects is the Federal Transit Authority's (FTA) Section 5307 Program. These funds are typically used to purchase new buses, equipment, and for preventative maintenance and planning.
- To better serve elderly persons and persons with disabilities, the transit agencies are also eligible for FTA's Section 5310 Enhanced Mobility for the Elderly and Disabled Program funds. Also known as the Specialized Transportation Program, these funds may be used for capital or operating expenses.
- FTA's Section 5339 Bus and Bus Facilities Program can also fund capital projects. These funds are also used for new buses or for capital facilities.
- Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) Surface Transportation Block Grant Program (STBG) is the most versatile funding option that can be used for a variety of projects.
- Congestion Mitigation Air Quality Program (CMAQ) can be used for projects that improve air quality, such as CNG buses, traffic signal improvements, and park and ride lots.

State Grant Programs

The Ohio Transit Partnership Program (OTP2) is a competitive grant program that was established to provide additional capital funding to Ohio's public transit operators for projects emphasizing system preservation. and PARTA have each received OTP2 funds almost every year since 2012. The OTP2 funds have come from ODOT-attributable federal funds (CMAQ or STBG), and now come from state general revenue funds (GRF). Although the OTP2 program now uses state general revenue funds (instead of CMAQ or STBG as it did in the past), the amount of funding is insufficient for the needs of the transit agencies. According to the Ohio Statewide Transit Needs Study from 2015, "The use of GRF (general revenue funds) in Ohio to fund public transit has been in steady decline" since 2000.

The Diesel Emissions Reduction Grant (DERG) Program is offered by ODOT annually in coordination with the Ohio Environmental Protection Agency (OEPA) to public and private sector diesel fleets (motor vehicle, marine, locomotive, and highway construction equipment). METRO and PARTA have each been awarded DERG funds regularly on an annual basis for a number of years.

Need for Additional State Funding

Currently, besides the small amount of OTP2, the State of Ohio has no stable or dedicated funding for transit service. The urban transit program has seen a reduction from $30 million in 2000 to $1.6 million in 2014. Similarly, the rural transit program has seen funding reduce from $4.2 million in 2000 to just over $3 million in 2014. Transit agencies rely on federal funds for their capital, maintenance, and planning expenses, but these aren't always sufficient. The small amount of local funding transit agencies receive from sales tax may not cover their operations. Additionally, smaller transit agencies may not be able to use federal funds because they are unable to come up with the required local match. As the State of Ohio demonstrated in 2019 with the gas tax increase, there is a need for increased and dedicated funding at the state level. Since state general revenue funds for transit have been declining since their peak in 2000, and Ohio's population is continuing to age, a dedicated source of funding at the state level to provide a reliable source of funding for operations for our transit agencies is long overdue.

AMATS Policy Committee discussed the state funding support of transit at their May 16, 2019 meeting and approved a motion for the AMATS staff to provide a letter of support. On June 18, 2019, AMATS signed a letter of support that was sent to Governor Mike DeWine. In the letter, AMATS Director Curtis Baker and Policy Chairwoman Bobbie Beshara, Village of Richfield Mayor, requested that the governor support a $70 million investment beginning with the 2020-21 budget. This amount was substantially smaller than the recommendation that came out of the Ohio Statewide Transit Needs Study in 2015. That study, produced by ODOT, recommended the state invest $120 million a year in transit, rising to $185 million in 2025, in order to cover 10% of the costs to preserve Ohio's transit system and provide the stable and reliable funding source that is so greatly needed.

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